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Working Paper

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GLO Discussion Paper, No. 869

Provided in Cooperation with:
Global Labor Organization (GLO)

Suggested Citation: Barili, Emilia; Grembi, Veronica; Rosso, Anna C. (2021) : Domestic Violence and Gender Stereotypes: Perceptions, Justifications, and Reactions, GLO Discussion Paper, No. 869, Global Labor Organization (GLO), Essen

This Version is available at:
https://hdl.handle.net/10419/235034

Domestic Violence and Gender Stereotypes: Perceptions, Justifications, and Reactions. *

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June 7, 2021

Abstract

Using a new measure of the strength of gender stereotypes defined at the individual level and based on responses to a survey conducted with more than 4,500 Italian women in July 2020, we show that women with stronger stereotypes are more likely to state that they know a victim of violence but are not more likely to state that violence (physical or psychological) is widespread in their area of residence. They are also more likely to rank behaviours meant to control a victim's interpersonal contacts and access to financial resources as more serious than physically and sexually violent behaviours and to justify violent acts using distressing, event-specific circumstances (*e.g.,* a period of economic distress) rather than the deep-seated psychological issues of the attackers. Finally, when personal stereotyping is stronger, respondents are more likely to suggest that a hypothetical victim of violence either not react to or deal directly with the partner rather than look for formal help. Using different controls for the impact of the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic on the respondents' personal and economic lives does not affect our main findings.

Key words: Gender Stereotypes, Domestic Violence Perceptions, Justifications for Violent Behaviour, COVID-19

JEL codes: J12, I18

*We gratefully acknowledge financial support from Fondazione Cariplo. All conclusions, however, are our own.

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1 Introduction

Domestic violence (DV) is a structurally under-reported phenomenon (*e.g.,* Morgan and Truman (2018); Morgan and Oudekerk (2019), Women (2020)) that has recently received remarkable interest due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as limitations to mobility, stay-at-home orders and distress due to economic and working conditions are expected to have increased the incidence of DV. While the effect of the pandemic on DV is still an open question (*e.g.,* Leslie and Wilson (2020), Bullinger et al. (2020), Bhalotra et al. (2020)), the proper recording of acts of violence faces several challenges, such as a lack of economic independence and job skills among women, religious beliefs, the presence of children, a lack of knowledge of the services available to help victims, and the systematic underestimation of the seriousness of the situation (Bates et al. (2019)). In this paper, we provide a more in-depth analysis of the factors that drive perceptions of the seriousness of DV situations, exploiting data from a unique survey that we conducted in July 2020 covering more than 4,500 Italian women. Italy is an interesting case study: gender-based violence and DV are still underground issues. According to the 2014 National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) survey on DV, almost 30% of the victims of some form of violence do not share this fact with anybody, only 12% of women report the violence to the police, and only 4% report it to an anti-violence centre, despite these actions being important steps towards eradicating violence.[1]

Perceiving violence is the first step towards gaining an awareness of and dealing with the victimization process. If DV is believed to be uncommon, even in cases in which women experience it, reporting is also expected to be lower, as violence is perceived to be a matter that the community should not be aware of (Aizer and Dal Bó (2009)). Societal perceptions of the diffusion and relevance of DV can play an important role in driving legislation to support and protect victims. If DV is believed to be a societal issue and not only a private family matter, public opinion will be affected, eventually leading women to be empowered to formally or informally seek help. However, little is known about which factors affect public opinion on DV and, in particular, which different cultural elements, including norms and values with major behavioural effects, play a role that reinforces DV over time (Chartrand and Bargh (1999)). To address this gap, we analyse the correlation between perceptions of DV and the strength of gender stereotypes using a new measure of stereotyping constructed at the individual level.

Ex ante, the role of gender stereotypes might be ambiguous. When gender stereotypes are stronger,

[1] `https://www.istat.it/it/violenza-sulle-donne/il-fenomeno/violenza-dentro-e-fuori-la-famiglia/consapevolezza-e-uscita-dalla-violenza`

women are less empowered, which means, according to a bargaining model, that they have fewer credible outside options to stop the violence (Aizer (2010); Tauchen et al. (1991); Farmer and Tiefenthaler (1997)). Hence, a lower degree of emancipation leads to both more violence and less reporting due to victim blaming (*e.g.,* Anderberg et al. (2016); Tur-Prats (2019)). However, according to male backlash theory (MacMillan and Gartner (1999)), women's empowerment can have the opposite effect by challenging gender stereotypes, causing males to feel that their breadwinner role is threatened (Dobash and Dobash (1979); Bloch and Rao (2002)). Hence, a lower degree of emancipation would lead to less violence and less reporting (Agüero, 2019). Understanding the direction of these effects is therefore an empirical matter.

After validating our measure of stereotyping with other available measures, we show the correlation between stereotyping and official reports of violent crimes against women, differentiating between crimes for which reporting is more important (*e.g.,* battering) and crimes for which reporting is less relevant (*i.e.,* murders). Our results show that the stronger the gender norms are (*i.e.,* the more traditional the role of the woman is), the lower the incidence of reported battering and rape cases, while no significant effect is found for the incidence of murders. This first result points to a reporting problem, rather than a difference in the incidence of violence, which should be captured by the incidence of murders.

Then, we focus on several definitions of perceptions of DV based on our survey. First, we focus on the likelihood that the respondent will reveal having knowledge of a victim of DV and her assessment of the diffusion of violence (both physical and psychological) in her area of residence. We do not directly ask the respondents if they have ever been victims of DV, since the reporting costs of gender violence accrue not only when formally seeking help through the authorities or shelters but also in safer situations, such as surveys, in which respondents are asked direct questions (Agüero and Frisancho, 2020). Hence, we opt for a less direct approach to measure individual experiences with DV, asking the women about their general knowledge (*e.g.,* knowing someone who has been a victim of violence), rather than their direct experience (*e.g.,* having been a victim of violence).[2] Then, we exploit the results of two tasks that the respondents were asked to perform: to rank 14 behaviours (from recrimination to sexual violence) according to their severity and to assign 1 out of 10 potential causes (from economic distress to the abuse of substances), meant to be a potential justification for the behaviour, to each type of behaviour. Controlling for a broad range of socio-economic characteristics

[2]While we are not able to differentiate between these two situations, we believe that by using these alternative measures, which do not require a direct declaration about the respondent's private life, we are more likely to capture the actual prevalence of the issue, limiting measurement error.

and for area-of-residence fixed effects, we show that an increase of one standard deviation in the strength of gender stereotyping is associated with a significant increase of 6.2% (at the mean of the variable) in knowing a victim of DV but that there is no increase in perceptions of the diffusion of DV within the area of residence, as if individual episodes are not enough to reflect a community-level problem. When we group the 14 behaviours into macro categories, we show that as the strength of gender stereotyping increases, physically and sexually violent behaviours are ranked lower by the respondent. Finally, respondents with stronger stereotypes have a greater tendency to justify violent behaviours with rationales related to transitory circumstances, such as those related to the exceptional conditions triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, than with deeper and more structural causes such as child-related trauma.

We enrich the analysis with findings from a question in which we ask the respondent to select the type of advice she would provide in a hypothetical situation in which she had to deal with a victim of violence (or the actual advice given if she knew a victim). The types of advice, defined as *reactions to violence*, are classified into categories based on the agency or individual identified as crucial for reaching a solution: the police, dedicated services (*e.g.,* helplines, anti-violence centres), or her partner. A fourth category includes giving no advice. We show that stronger stereotyping is associated with a significant reduction in the level of the reaction, with a lower propensity to advise reporting the incident to the police and a lower tendency to recommend the use of available services, while the propensity to suggest solving the problem with the partner is higher.

Our results are overall robust to the introduction of a set of controls meant to capture the disruptive impact of and the stress caused by the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in the daily lives of the respondents, such as economic concerns about their future working status and cohabitation distress due to the restrictions.

We quantify our results by looking at the distribution of the strength of stereotypes. In particular, moving from the bottom 25th percentile of the stereotype distribution to the top 25th percentile increases the conditional probability of knowing a victim by 3 percentage points (from 37% to 40%). Additionally, the probability of advising a victim to report violence to the police decreases by 5 percentage points (from 54% to 49%), the probability of advising a victim to talk to/leave her partner increases by 4 percentage points, and the probability of having no reaction increases by more than 3 percentage points.

This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 provides information on our survey and describes the main timeline of the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in Italy, along with the associated

restrictions. In Section 3, we explain our index for gender stereotyping, validate it, and provide the main implications of stereotyping on gender violence using administrative data on crimes against women. In Section 4, we define our main outcomes of interest as far as perceptions of DV are concerned, and in Section 5, we present our main empirical analysis, in which we also analyse the relation between stereotyping and reactions to violence. Section 6 concludes.

2 The survey in the COVID-19 pandemic context

The first wave of COVID-19 in Italy officially started with the January 31^{st} declaration of a state of emergency. After February 24^{th}, the Italian National Health Service introduced stringent measures to contain the epidemic, starting in the northern regions. These measures included quarantining municipal clusters, imposing strict restrictions on people's movements, temporarily closing schools and shops, and temporarily halting industrial activities.[3] In the ministerial decree dated March 4^{th}, 2020, the government promulgated a series of nationwide measures to contain the spread of the epidemic, declaring the entire country a *red zone* on March 9^{th}. A dramatic restriction of economic activities and mobility, which included the closure of all schools and universities, was enforced across the whole country. Many activities were re-instated after May 18^{th}, but mobility across regions was not allowed until June 3^{rd}. Regarding economic issues, the Italian government initially banned layoffs for 60 days starting in March 2020 (Decree n. 18/2020) and then extended the layoff ban until March 2021. Overall, the lockdown measures implemented by the Italian government during the first wave lasted for 10 weeks and, in terms of their strictness, far surpassed those of other European countries, with the exception of Spain.

We conducted our survey with a sample of women aged 20-65 in July 2020, considered the end of the first wave of restrictions in Italy. The idea was to gain an understanding of perceptions of DV in the aftermath of a period in which the government ran an intensive campaign to increase awareness of gender violence (see Colagrossi et al. (2020)), and the media had covered numerous stories on episodes of DV. The questionnaire was administered online from July 15^{th} to July 31^{st} through email invitations, and respondents could participate via computer-assisted web interviews (CAWIs). On average, it took 20 minutes to complete the 66-question survey. The final analysis was performed on a sample of 4,574 women. We use a female-only sample since the main goal of our analysis is to dig more deeply into the mechanisms behind perceptions of and potential reactions to DV episodes.[4] While we

[3] http://www.governo.it/it/provvedimento/provvedimento-a3401322202203/14166

[4] As reported by ISTAT on the basis of official data from the *Dipartimento per le Pari Opportunità*, more than 90%

acknowledge that the male perspective is very important, especially for better grasping the motivation behind violent episodes, those motivations do not constitute the main focus of the present research. The design of the sample guarantees that it is representative of the actual population in terms of geographical area and age groups.[5] When comparing the women in our sample and the actual female population registered by ISTAT as of January 1^{st}, 2020, we find that the geographical distributions match, while the women in our sample are slightly younger (on average by 2 years) than those in the actual population.

The survey is divided into two parts. In the first part, we ask questions related to the socio-economic status of the respondent (*e.g.,* marital status, education level), including working conditions (both personal and of the partner, if any) during the COVID-19 pandemic. The second part of the survey is based on the personal stereotypes held by the respondent, perceptions of violence and behavioural responses to violence in the form of advice provided in a hypothetical situation of dealing with a victim of DV (or an actual situation if the respondent knew a victim), which could potentially include the respondent herself.

Table A1 reports the average characteristics of the respondents and provides a detailed definition of each variable used in our analysis. The sample mainly consists of Italian nationals; approximately 47% of respondents are married, 60% have at least one child, and 61% self-identify as religious. In terms of age, the respondents are almost uniformly distributed across 4 age groups, with approximately 30% younger than 35 and almost 20% older than 55. Almost 40% live in homes of more than 100 sq. m. (which captures both the level of wealth and the constraints imposed during the lockdown weeks). A total of 78% of respondents have at least a high school degree, and 35% declared that they were not employed in February 2020 (before the first wave started). The majority of respondents have had some work experience in their life. A total of 79% of the respondents considered it highly important to comply with the lockdown restrictions imposed between March and May 2020. Almost 30% have struggled with serious financial problems due to the pandemic, 34% fear that they will lose their job as a consequence of the pandemic, and in 17% of the cases, the respondent experienced distress due to cohabitation as a consequence of the restrictions. In Table A2, we provide the main correlation coefficients for the controls used in the empirical analysis.

Finally, since some of the reasons for not reporting DV to the authorities in Italy include the

of victims who call the helpline for gender violence (1522) are women (from 93% in 2013 to 98% in 2020). Data source: `https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/246557`.

[5]The survey prioritizes the representativeness of the regions that were most affected by the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic (*i.e.,* the Northern regions) while guaranteeing representativeness at the macro-level for the Centre and the South/Islands.

fact that violence is often considered a private matter, that victims do not want the police or people external to the relationship to be involved, that they want to protect their partner or the relationship, especially if kids are involved, and that they believe that nothing can be done (Aizer and Dal Bó (2009)), we ask questions related to the type of network respondents rely on when they have to share positive (*e.g.,* a promotion or good news from their personal life) or negative (*e.g.,* a personal or work-related struggle) events in their life. Based on their answers, we identify three types of networks: a family network composed of the partner and the family of origin, a formal network that includes professional figures such as general practitioners (GPs) or therapists, and an informal network that includes friends and co-workers. Note that respondents could choose up to 3 options for each type of event, including the option "no one". Therefore, the indexes are not mutually exclusive. To facilitate interpretation in the analysis, the network indexes are defined as dummies, each assuming the value 1 if the respondent shares an above-median number of events with the corresponding network.

3 Stereotypes: Measures and implications

3.1 Measures

We provide a new measure of the strength of gender stereotypes constructed at the individual level and based on the extent to which respondents agreed or strongly agreed with 8 statements, as reported in Table A3. The statements range from clear stereotyped assessments, such as men being better in leadership roles, to stereotypes which the respondent might feel burdensome as a woman, such as those referring to the distress generated in a relationship when the woman earns more than the man. We construct an index based on the z-score of the responses to the statements: for each respondent, the z-score is equal to the average of all standardized replies. This index has a zero average by construction (average of mean-zero values) and a standard deviation of 0.532. The advantage of our stereotype measure compared to others available at the area-of-residence level (*i.e.,* the regional level) is shown in Figure A1, which reports the geographical distribution of provinces with index values below or above the average values for our index. The map, developed at the provincial level (110 provinces), shows that there is geographical variation across the country, both between regions (21) and within regions, and our index does not necessarily result in stronger stereotypes being more closely associated with a certain area of the country, while other measures traditionally associate stereotypes with the southern regions of Italy.

However, we validate our index with two alternative measures of the strength of gender stereotypes

coming from different sources, as explained in Table A3. The first is based on a 2018 survey of gender violence and stereotypes conducted by ISTAT, which also used several questions included in the World Value Survey. ISTAT released aggregated regional data, and we exploit the share of respondents who strongly agreed or agreed with three statements. We create two z-score indexes based on the standardized regional shares, one including the share of female respondents only (*ISTAT females*) and one including the share of both female and male respondents (*ISTAT all*). As a second measure of stereotyping, we use regional-level data from the Labour Force Survey from 2018 and construct a ratio of the employment rate of women to that of men, with both rates being measured for the age group 54 or older. As it is generally the case that women have higher employment rates at the beginning of their working careers but tend to leave the labour force after having children, the employment rates for this age group allow us to identify women who are no longer fertile but managed to remain in the labour force. Higher values for this ratio represent higher levels of gender equality in labour market participation, proxying for weaker gender stereotyping. Table A4 shows the correlation coefficients among all the regional average stereotype measures. Our measure of the strength of gender stereotypes is positively correlated with both ISTAT indexes (+0.012 for *ISTAT females* and +0.012 for *ISTAT all*) and negatively correlated with the employment ratio (-0.010). Decomposing the correlations into the North vs. the Centre and South, we observe that the correlations with both ISTAT indexes are even stronger, especially in the Centre and South. The correlations between the stereotype measures (individual stereotyping and the ISTAT indexes) and the employment ratio are much lower in the North than in the other areas, meaning that women in the North tend to adhere less to gender norms when participating in the labour market.

3.2 Implications

Our main focus is on two issues: perceptions of violence (P) and reactions to violence (R). P is defined as the awareness and perceived importance of the severity of violent behaviours (*e.g.,* perceptions of the diffusion of violence, ranking of behaviours), while R refers to the individual response to those behaviours (*e.g.,* reporting the violence to the authorities, leaving the partner). We assume that both components contribute to the discrepancies between the *Real* incidence of violence and *Reported* violence, as expressed by Equation 1.[6]

[6]According to a survey conducted by ISTAT in 2014, Italian victims do not report acts of violence because they state that they have learned to deal with such issues independently (almost 40% of all answers), they believe that it is not a serious issue (31% of cases), they are afraid of not being believed or are ashamed of the violence (7%), they do not trust the police (6%), or they are afraid that their partner will be arrested (13%). The underlying cultural norms and gender stereotypes determine what victims decide to report and how they make their reports, as these depend on what they perceive to be an abuse.

$$Reported = f(Real, P, R) \tag{1}$$

Even if the strength of gender stereotyping is strictly related to both issues, we cannot state a priori which component has the most impact. The analysis of officially reported crimes gives some first insights into the relation expressed by Equation 1 and gender stereotypes. We focus on the comparison between murders and other crimes—battering and rape—assuming that the former are less affected by under-reporting. Expectations regarding the role of gender stereotyping on crimes against women are mixed: on the one hand, there could be a positive correlation due to a higher incidence of violence; on the other hand, there could be a lower incidence due to the prevalence of under-reporting. Data on crimes against women for all 110 provinces over the period 2007-2018 are provided by the Italian Ministry of the Interior. We run a basic OLS regression in which the outcome of interest is the crime rate per 1,000 inhabitants explained as a function of gender stereotyping while controlling for (log) regional GDP, year fixed effects, and macro-area fixed effects. We use all the available gender stereotyping indexes, and we report the results in Table 1.

Higher levels of any crime against women are negatively and significantly correlated with stereotyping, independent of any proxy for stereotyping, implying that in places where gender norms are more conservative, the value of *reported* events is lower. However, it is hard to draw a line on the underlying cause of this correlation: in areas with stronger gender stereotyping, *battering* and *rape* in particular might be less likely to be reported either because they are less likely to happen (a lower incidence of the event—*e.g.,* women are more likely to abide by traditional gender norms, which reduces conflicts with their partners), they are perceived as less serious (*e.g.,* a slap is just something that happens), or women are less likely to react if they observe a violent episode (*e.g.,* individuals try to solve violent situations within the family). However, the negative correlation is significant for *battering* and *rape*, but there is no significant effect on *murder*. This seems to suggest that gender stereotyping has a stronger effect on reactions to violence, since murder suffers less from under-reporting. Hence, if anything, these results are more indicative of a reporting explanation than an incidence of crime explanation.

4 The definitions of the outcomes of interests

Using the data from our survey, we construct several measures of both perceptions and reactions.

4.1 Perceptions

We proxy for P using three measures: *Know a victim*, *Physical violence widespread*, and *Psychological violence widespread*. The area of reference for the diffusion of violence is the province of residence of the respondent. P is a dummy equal to 1 when the respondent declares knowing a victim of DV or considering violence (either physical or psychological) to be widespread in her province of residence and equal to 0 otherwise. We alternatively test the results for P by using the individual components of P. Since we rely on a survey, all outcomes use self-reports for the topic of interest.

As an alternative measure of perceptions, we ask the respondent to rank, using their best judgement, 14 behaviours related to both psychological and physical violence from the least to the most serious. Overall, the listed behaviours reflect 5 dimensions of violence: *social* (*i.e.,* control over social media, control over friends), *economic* (*i.e.,* control over work, control over expenses), *psychological* (*i.e.,* quarrels, threats, insults, humiliation, recrimination, spite), *physical* (*i.e.,* throwing objects, battering), and *sexual* (*i.e.,* sex requests, sexual violence). At the individual level, the score assigned to each dimension ($Dimension_i$) is defined as the average individual rank ($rank_{ni}$) assigned to each of the N relevant behaviours associated with that dimension, as in Equation 2. Since we ask respondents to rank 14 behaviours according to how they judge the severity of those behaviours, the individual rank assigned to each behaviour, $rank_{ni}$, is a discrete measure that ranges from 1—the least severe—to 14—the most severe. For instance, if respondent A assigns a severity of 6 to *throwing objects* and a severity of 10 to *battering*, the resulting score assigned to physical violence ($Dimension_i$) is equal to 8 (the average of the individual ranks, $rank_{ni}$, assigned to the relevant behaviours, *throwing objects* and *battering*).

$$Dimension_i = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{n=1}^{N} rank_{ni} \tag{2}$$

Figure 1 graphically presents the individual- and provincial-level rankings for each dimension, while Figure A2 reports the specific ranking of each of the 14 behaviours. There is a remarkable difference between the scores at the individual level and the scores at the provincial level. Individual-level scores exhibit only marginal differences among the dimensions of violence, while the provincial-level scores exhibit a clear gradient in the perceived severity of violent behaviours, with social and economic control placed at the bottom of the distribution and psychological, physical, and sexual violence receiving increasingly higher scores. This difference points to a large dispersion in the perceptions of severity at the individual level that is averaged out at the provincial level.

Finally, to better grasp the mechanism behind perceptions of violence, we ask the respondents to choose from among a pre-set list of potential causes explaining the previously listed violent behaviours, and we define these causes as potential justifications or rationalizations. The respondents could only select 1 justification out of 10 per behaviour. We group these justifications into three categories: COVID-19-related (*i.e.,* limitations on social life, inadequate living spaces, inadequate access to IT devices), economic distress not necessarily due to COVID-19 (*i.e.,* stress due to work uncertainty, financial problems within the relationship), and causes that are associated with less temporary situations (*i.e.,* issues balancing family and work, addiction to toxic substances, abuse of toxic substances, a need to feel superior to one's partner, and negative experiences as a child). The underlying purpose is to differentiate between justifications for violence associated with temporary circumstances and justifications for violence associated with deeper problems that should not be considered situation-specific.[7]

4.2 Reactions

Reactions to Violence (R) is a dummy variable taking on the value 1 when the respondent has or would have advised a victim of DV to report the act of violence directly to the police. Version (a) includes the responses of individuals who have had some experience with victims, while version (b) includes answers from respondents who have never had experience with victims. The index R combines the responses given in both version (a) and version (b) of the questions. Respondents were given the same set of answers in a multiple-choice format and could select a maximum of two options: report the violence to the police, ask for help from anti-violence centres, call the gender-violence support helpline (1522), ask for help from other services or professional figures (*e.g.,* family care centres, GPs, emergency room operators, psychologists, lawyers), talk to and resolve it with the partner, leave the partner, unaware of what to do or advise, no advice as the respondent feels that it is inappropriate to interfere with others' family issues, no advice as it was accepted that such behaviour could happen within a relationship. Apart from the option *Reporting to the police*, we grouped the other options into *Use of services* (anti-violence centres, 1522 helpline, other services), *Partner* (talking with or leaving the partner) and *No reaction* (no advice, no interference, or it could happen). It is important to note that we are not evaluating the effectiveness of alternative reactions but are rather comparing the covariates affecting the respondents' preferences for each of the alternative options.

[7]To facilitate interpretation, rankings of both behaviours and justifications are included in the analysis as dummies taking on the value 1 when the index is above the sample median.

5 Stereotypes and domestic violence: The empirical analysis

5.1 Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics regarding the main and secondary outcomes are presented in Table A5. As described in Table A6, the strength of gender stereotyping, as measured at the individual level in our survey, appears to be strongly correlated with the outcomes. Figure 2 provides a graphical representation of the specific relation between the strength of stereotypes and the main outcomes (P and R). These descriptive results are consistent with the results presented in Table 1.[8]

5.2 Analysis and results

As the outcome variables are all dummy variables, for each respondent i, we estimate the following linear probability model, with β being our parameter of interest:

$$Y_i = \beta Stereotypes_i + X_i^{'}\gamma + \rho_{ma} + u_i \tag{3}$$

where $X_{ir}^{'}$ includes individual-level controls, including the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents, as described in Table A1 and Section 2. We include 5 macro-area fixed effects (ρ_{ma}) to control for structural differences across Italian macro-areas, and we cluster standard errors at the same level.[9] The results are presented in Table 2, Table 3, and Table 4 for perceptions of violence and Table 5 for reactions.[10]

Overall, gender stereotyping is correlated with both perceptions of violence and reactions to violence, as defined in our survey. $Stereotypes_i$ has no effect on the aggregate measure of P (Table 2, column (1)) or on the respondents' assessments of the diffusion of violence (overall, physical, or psychological) in their province of residence (Table 2, columns (5), (7), and (9)). However, $Stereotypes_i$ is positively and significantly correlated with *Know a victim* (Table 2, column (3)); here, we observe that an increase of one standard deviation in the strength of stereotypes (+0.532) increases the probability of knowing a victim by 6.2% at the mean of the outcome (+0.024 percentage points). This may

[8] In Table A7, we present the results of a regression of the actual number of anti-violence centres weighted by the resident population on different measures of gender stereotyping. From the positive but non-significant coefficient, we can infer that the lower propensity to use services in places where gender stereotyping is stronger is not linked to the actual presence of services in those provinces.

[9] We rely on the official classification of Italy into five macro-areas as proposed by ISTAT (Figure A3). Regions are grouped as follows: the North-west (Piemonte, Valle d'Aosta, Liguria, Lombardia), North-east (Trentino-Alto Adige, Veneto, Friuli-Venezia-Giulia, Emilia-Romagna), Centre (Toscana, Marche, Umbria, Lazio), South (Abruzzo, Molise, Campania, Puglia, Basilicata, Calabria), and Islands (Sicilia, Sardegna).

[10] Full list of estimating coefficients regarding socio-economic controls available in Tables A8, A9, A10, and A11.

signal that *real* episodes of violence are somewhat higher in areas with stronger gender stereotypes, yet this does not affect perceptions of DV's relevance as a social issue (i.e., perceptions of the diffusion of violence do not change).

Table 3 reports the results from using the variables $Dimension_i$ as outcomes in Equation 3.[11] Stereotypes play a significant role in explaining the perceived severity of specific violent behaviours, with stronger stereotyping being associated with perceptions of lower severity for physical and sexual violence (-7.5% and -9.7%, respectively) and perceptions of higher severity for social and economic control (+7.8% and +4.1%, respectively).

Table 4 presents the results for Equation 3 when using each of the possible justifications as the relevant outcome. *Stereotypes* are highly predictive of the type of rationalization chosen to justify DV. In particular, respondents with stronger stereotypes tend to prefer rationalizations related to current circumstances (+8.3% for justifications related to COVID-19 and +5.5% for crisis-related justifications when the strength of stereotyping increases by 1 standard deviation), while excluding rationalizations that are less likely to be modified by current events, such as the aggressor having experienced childhood trauma (-11.1% for justifications related to long-term issues when the strength of stereotyping increases by 1 standard deviation). This indicates that when gender norms are stronger, acts of violence are more likely to be explained as the result of contingent distress, and as such, the violence will be over when the distressing situation is over, and so no particular reaction is necessary.

Moving to Table 5, which shows the results for R, we observe that $Stereotypes_i$ are associated with a significant reduction in the level of reactions, as there is both a lower propensity to report episodes to the police (a one-standard deviation increase in stereotyping implies a decrease of -6.3% at the mean of the outcome) and a lower propensity to use services (a one-standard deviation increase in stereotyping is associated with a decrease of -2.4% at the mean of the variable). Additionally, an increase in stereotyping increases the propensity to suggest solving the issue with the partner directly, either by talking it over or leaving him, or to have no reaction. For a one-standard deviation increase in stereotyping, these reactions increase by +9.6% and +41%, respectively.

5.3 Controlling for the role of the COVID-19 pandemic

As we assess the main drivers of perceptions of and reactions to violence, we enrich the model in Equation 3 by including an additional set of controls, C_i and $COVID\ Mortality_p$, as in Equation

[11] Table 3 reports the results from regressions in which the outcome is a dummy variable equal to 1 when the original index is above the sample median. Tables A12 and A13 show the results from using a continuous outcome variable. The results are consistent across specifications.

4. $C_i^{'}$ specifically contains individual-level COVID-19 information, while $COVID\ Mortality_p$ is the COVID-19 mortality rate in the province of residence. The first set of COVID-19-related controls (C_i) include complying with lockdown rules during the first wave of COVID-19, experiencing cohabitation distress during the lockdown, having known a victim of DV since the start of the first COVID-19 wave, fearing job loss (or having lost a job) and having had financial problems due to the pandemic.

$$Y_i = \beta_1 Stereotypes_i + X_i^{'}\gamma + C_i^{'}\delta + \tau Covid\ Mortality_p + \rho_{ma} + u_{ir} \tag{4}$$

The COVID-19-related controls are strongly positively correlated with perceptions of violence, while they play a minor role in reactions to violence. Tables 2, 3, and 4 present the results for perceptions of violence. Adding $C_i^{'}$ cancels out the effect of stereotyping on perceptions, as defined according to the outcomes in Table 5. The strong positive relations between the COVID-19-related controls and perceptions of violence could additionally suggest an increase in violent episodes since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, we are not able to perfectly disentangle an increase in *real* episodes from an increase in P. Tables 3 and 4 show that the main results for the ranking and justification of violent behaviours do not change when controlling for $C_i^{'}$, and the coefficients on $C_i^{'}$ are only mildly significant, suggesting that there is not only a context-specific element in perceptions of violence, which are largely affected by contemporaneous events, but also a "structural" element that allows behaviours to be perceived as a problem that is not necessarily context-specific. This intuition is confirmed by the results for reactions to violence, as shown in Table 5.

We verify the robustness of the results by considering alternative measures of gender stereotyping. The results are robust and available in Table A14.

Quantification of the role of gender stereotypes

Here, we conduct a simple exercise in which we graphically report how perceptions and reactions change along the stereotype distribution. In particular, we focus on the bottom 25th, median and top 25th percentiles of the distribution. In Figure 3, we report the results of these simulations. In particular, we show that as stereotyping increases, the conditional probability of knowing a victim increases: moving from the 25th to the 75th percentile of the stereotype distribution increases this probability by 3 percentage points (8%). Moreover, the same shift in gender stereotyping decreases the probability of advising the victim to report the violence to the police from 54% to 49%, a decrease

of 5 percentage points (9%), and decreases the probability of advising the victim to use services from 81% to 79%, a 2.8 percentage-point reduction (3.4%). The probability of suggesting that the victim talk to/leave her partner increases by 4 percentage points (12%), from 28% to 32%, and finally, the probability of having no reaction increases by more than 3 percentage points (44%).

6 Conclusion

DV is an under-reported phenomenon that has become even more prominent during the COVID-19 pandemic because of limitations on mobility and the economic and social distress that have also affected the way individuals perceive this issue overall. DV reporting is in fact strongly linked to perceptions of the violent situation the victim is living in and is linked in particular to possible underestimations of the severity of the matter. Correctly perceiving the seriousness of this issue is, however, the first step towards gaining an awareness of and dealing with DV. If DV is believed to be less diffuse, reporting is likely to be lower, as it is believed to be a private matter that is not relevant to the community. By changing how DV is perceived and affecting public opinion, women could become more empowered to seek help.

In this work, we focus on the role of gender stereotypes in defining perceptions, measured as the probability of a woman knowing a victim, that woman's assessment of the diffusion of both physical and psychological violence, and finally, her ranking of the severity of DV-related behaviours and how she justifies them. Additionally, we look at the role of reactions: how likely it is that the respondent would advise a victim to report DV to the police. We also differentiate among reactions on the basis of whether the respondent has ever had experience with a victim of DV.

We find that the probability of knowing a victim is higher in places where stereotypes are stronger, yet these results are not accompanied by a higher probability of perceiving DV to be widespread within the province. Similarly, stronger gender stereotypes are linked to rankings of physically and sexually violent behaviours as less severe and to such behaviours being more likely to be justified as being caused by transitional circumstances such as the recent COVID-19 crisis and are less likely to be justified as being caused by pre-existing structural issues. To complement our analysis, we show that formal reactions (reporting violence to the police and making use of services) are less common, while having no reaction or an informal reaction (talking to the partner) is more common among individuals with stronger stereotypes.

Our work shows that DV under-reporting is strongly linked not only to how women perceive the

severity of DV but also to how they justify such behaviours. Possible justifications are also linked to the likelihood of reporting the violence to the police and formal support agencies.

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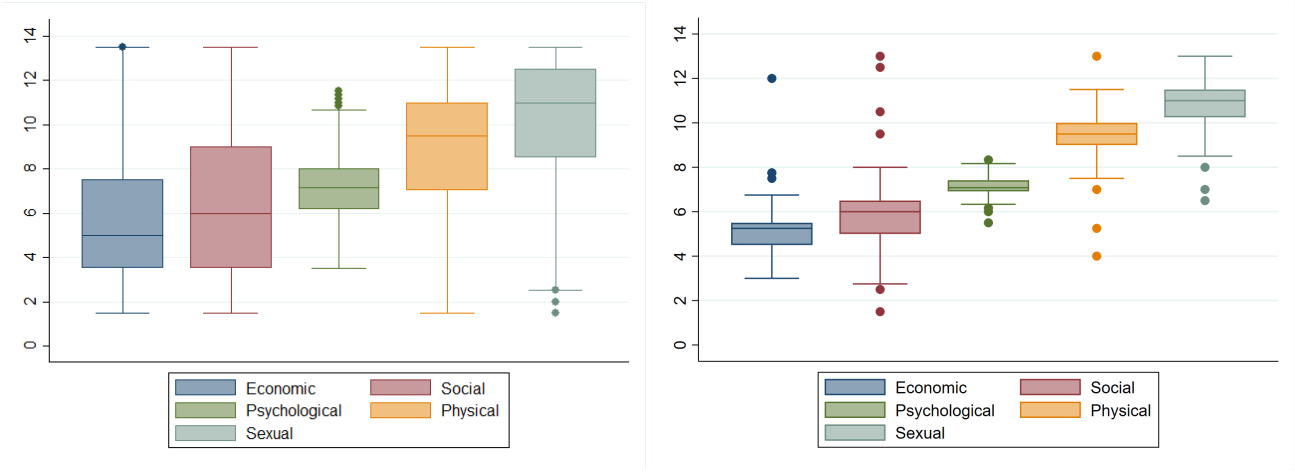
Tables and Figures

Table 1: **Stereotypes and Criminal Reports**

	ISTAT Females	ISTAT All	Employment	Our Survey	Mean
Battering	-0.012***	-0.007*	0.077*	-0.011*	0.226
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.042)	(0.006)	
Macro area FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Log Gdp	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
R square	0.284	0.267	0.269	0.273	
Rape	-0.003	-0.010***	0.078***	-0.012***	0.114
	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.030)	(0.004)	
Macro area FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Log Gdp	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
R square	0.447	0.472	0.462	0.47	
Murder	0.000	0.000	-0.003	-0.001	0.004
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.004)	(0.001)	
Macro area FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Log Gdp	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
R square	0.077	0.076	0.077	0.085	
N	229	229	229	229	

Notes: Data are provided by the Italian Ministry of the Interior at the provincial level and they refer to the period 2007-2017. Standard errors are robust. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. For an explanation of the variables see Table A3.

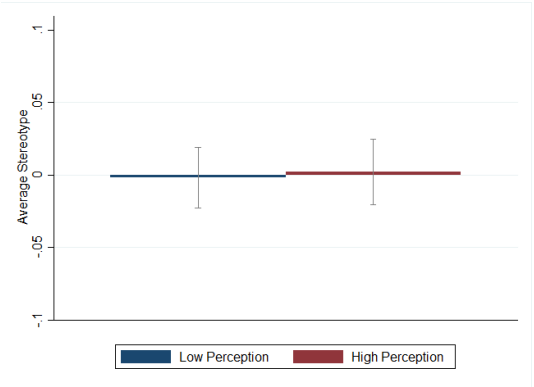
Figure 1: **Ranking of behaviours**



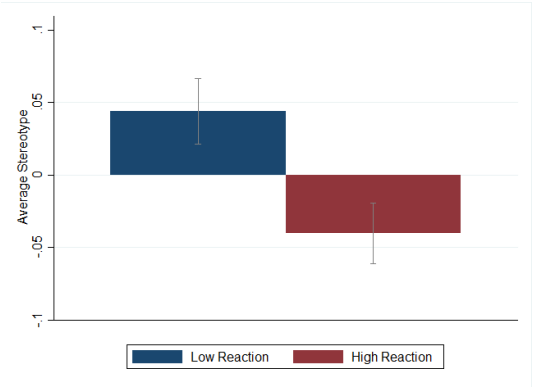
(a) Individual level (b) Provincial level

Notes: We show individual-level (right) and provincial-level (left) ranking of severity for each dimension of violence (*i.e.,* economic, social, psychological, physical, sexual). Provincial-level ranks are median values computed in the province of resident of the respondent. Each dimension ranks from 1 -lowest level of severity- to 14 -highest level of severity-. *Economic* includes control of work-life and expenses; *social* includes control of friends and social media; *psychological* includes spites, recriminations, quarrels, insults, threats and humiliations; *physical* includes throw of objects and battering; *sexual* includes sexual requests and sexual violence.

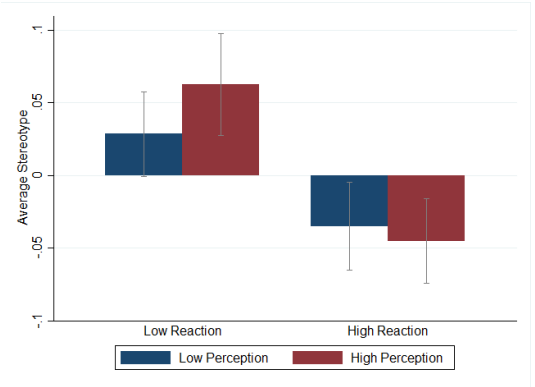
Figure 2: **Correlation between Stereotypes and Perception-Reaction**



(a) Perception



(b) Reaction



(c) Perception and Reaction

Source: Our survey

Table 2: **Outcome: Perception of Violence (1)**

	Perception		Know a victim		Violence widespread (Physical)		Violence widespread (Psychological)		Violence widespread	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Stereotype	0.027	-0.003	0.045***	0.006	-0.016	-0.025	0.008	0.003	-0.019	-0.026
	(0.023)	(0.021)	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.018)
Lockdown compliance		0.059***		0.048**		0.053*		0.039**		0.055*
		(0.012)		(0.014)		(0.023)		(0.013)		(0.025)
Cohabitation distress		0.096***		0.088***		0.070***		0.009		0.073***
		(0.013)		(0.009)		(0.009)		(0.011)		(0.009)
Know a victim during COVID-19		0.403***		0.504***		0.127***		0.090*		0.117***
		(0.022)		(0.022)		(0.014)		(0.033)		(0.016)
(Fear of) Jobloss due to COVID-19		0.035**		0.034**		0.03		0.011		0.029
		(0.010)		(0.009)		(0.019)		(0.010)		(0.019)
Financial problems due to COVID-19		0.080**		0.087**		0.043***		0.051***		0.035***
		(0.019)		(0.025)		(0.004)		(0.004)		(0.004)
COVID-19 death rate		0.000		0.000		0.000		0.000		0.000
		(0.000)		(0.000)		(0.000)		(0.000)		(0.000)
Controls	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Macro area FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Mean outcome	0.495	0.495	0.388	0.388	0.239	0.239	0.099	0.099	0.222	0.222
R-squared	0.037	0.120	0.036	0.158	0.032	0.054	0.029	0.049	0.031	0.051
N obs	4,574	4,574	4,574	4,574	4,574	4,574	4,574	4,574	4,574	4,574

Notes: Standard errors reported in brackets and clustered by macro-area.* indicates significance at 10%, ** indicates significance at 5%, *** indicates significance at 1% level.

Table 3: **Perception of Violence (2): Rankings**

	Social		Economic		Psychological		Physical		Sexual	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Stereotype	0.068***	0.046**	0.038***	0.022*	0.012	0.014	-0.066**	-0.036**	-0.083***	-0.053***
	(0.006)	(0.010)	(0.006)	(0.009)	(0.021)	(0.020)	(0.015)	(0.011)	(0.008)	(0.005)
Lockdown compliance		-0.093*		-0.078***		-0.003		0.127***		0.123**
		(0.038)		(0.010)		(0.010)		(0.025)		(0.034)
Cohabitation distress		0.017*		0.000		0.005		-0.052*		-0.041***
		(0.008)		(0.016)		(0.020)		(0.020)		(0.008)
Know a victim		0.049**		0.037		-0.061*		-0.024		-0.057**
during COVID-19		(0.011)		(0.019)		(0.023)		(0.029)		(0.019)
(Fear of) Jobloss		-0.002		0.007		0.033**		-0.007		0.007
due to COVID-19		(0.011)		(0.010)		(0.011)		(0.019)		(0.007)
Financial problems		0.027		0.011		-0.010		-0.045**		-0.038
due to COVID-19		(0.028)		(0.026)		(0.016)		(0.014)		(0.024)
COVID-19 mortality rate		0.000		0.000		0.000		0.000		0.001**
		(0.000)		(0.000)		(0.000)		(0.000)		(0.000)
Controls	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Macro area FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Mean outcome	0.465	0.465	0.498	0.498	0.474	0.474	0.467	0.467	0.457	0.457
R-squared	0.037	0.045	0.018	0.023	0.014	0.016	0.060	0.075	0.055	0.072
N obs	4,574	4,574	4,574	4,574	4,574	4,574	4,574	4,574	4,574	4,574

Notes: Standard errors reported in brackets and clustered by macro-area.* indicates significance at 10%, ** indicates significance at 5%, *** indicates significance at 1% level.

Table 4: **Perception of Violence (3): Alibi**

	Alibis COVID19		Alibis crisis		Alibis general	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Stereotype	0.076***	0.054***	0.050***	0.045***	-0.097***	-0.069**
	(0.009)	(0.011)	(0.007)	(0.009)	(0.013)	(0.016)
Lockdown compliance		-0.103***		0.022		0.139***
		(0.012)		(0.011)		(0.020)
Cohabitation distress		0.038		0.072**		-0.048*
		(0.019)		(0.021)		(0.019)
Know a victim		0.051		0.011		-0.017
during COVID19		(0.024)		(0.026)		(0.016)
(Fear of) Jobloss		-0.001		-0.003		-0.003
due to COVID19		(0.014)		(0.019)		(0.023)
Financial problems		-0.009		0.044		0.004
due to COVID19		(0.024)		(0.028)		(0.008)
COVID19 mortality rate		-0.000***		0.000		0.000
		(0.000)		(0.000)		(0.000)
Controls	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Macro area FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Mean outcome	0.487	0.487	0.488	0.488	0.467	0.467
R-squared	0.030	0.039	0.020	0.025	0.083	0.098
N obs	4,574	4,574	4,574	4,574	4,574	4,574

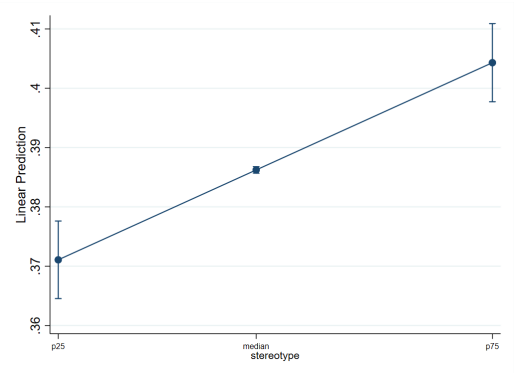
Notes: Standard errors reported in brackets and clustered by macro-area.* indicates significance at 10%, ** indicates significance at 5%, *** indicates significance at 1% level.

Table 5: **Reaction to Violence**

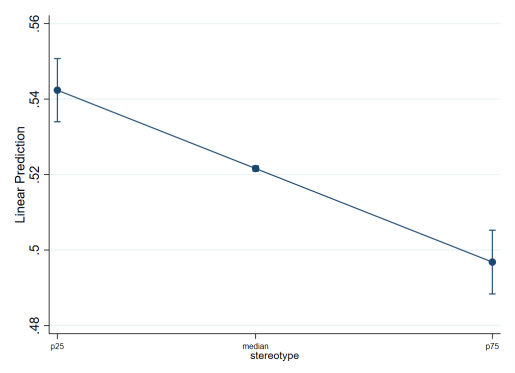
	Reaction		Service		Partner		No reaction	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Stereotype	-0.062***	-0.058***	-0.037*	-0.032*	0.055**	0.048**	0.043***	0.038**
	(0.012)	(0.011)	(0.016)	(0.013)	(0.015)	(0.011)	(0.009)	(0.010)
Lockdown compliance		0.052*		-0.008		0.014		-0.029***
		(0.020)		(0.025)		(0.015)		(0.005)
Cohabitation distress		0.034***		-0.031**		0.018		0.014
		(0.005)		(0.010)		(0.011)		(0.008)
Know a victim		0.01		-0.032		0.090*		-0.005
during COVID-19		(0.049)		(0.025)		(0.034)		(0.014)
(Fear of) Jobloss		-0.035*		0.008		0.008		0.003
due to COVID-19		(0.015)		(0.015)		(0.016)		(0.014)
Financial problems		0.039**		-0.029**		0.027**		-0.004
due to COVID-19		(0.014)		(0.010)		(0.007)		(0.006)
COVID-19 death rate		0.000		-0.000***		0.000		0.000
		(0.000)		(0.000)		(0.000)		(0.000)
Controls	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Macro area FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Mean outcome	0.520	0.520	0.805	0.805	0.304	0.304	0.056	0.056
R-squared	0.013	0.018	0.014	0.017	0.021	0.027	0.022	0.025
N obs	4,574	4,574	4,574	4,574	4,574	4,574	4,574	4,574

Notes: Standard errors reported in brackets and clustered by macro-area.* indicates significance at 10%, ** indicates significance at 5%, *** indicates significance at 1% level.

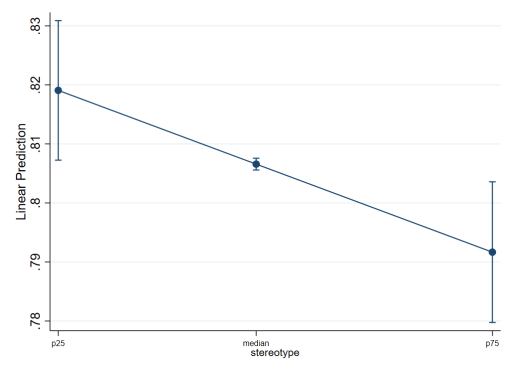
Figure 3: **Simulation**



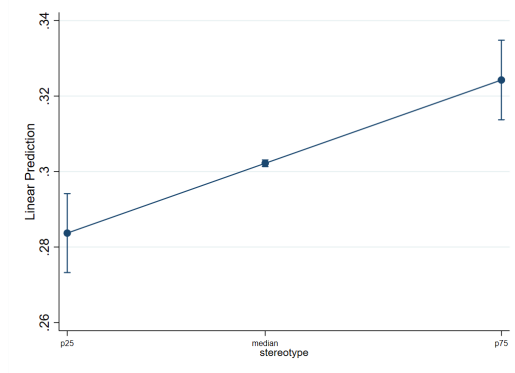
(a) Know a victim



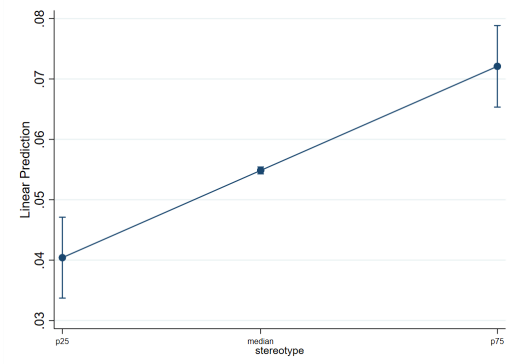
(b) Report to the Police



(c) Use of Services



(d) Talk/leave partner



(e) No reaction

Notes: We report the predicted levels of outcomes at the 25th, 50th and 75th percentiles of the distribution of gender stereotypes on the population. Only significant results from main equation are reported

Appendix A

Table A1: **Descriptive statistics - Controls**

Variable	Definition	Mean	Std.Dev.
Socio-Economic controls			
Kids	dummy=1 if the respondent has at least a kid	0.604	0.489
Married	dummy=1 if the respondent is married	0.466	0.499
Italian	dummy=1 if the respondent holds Italian citizenship	0.967	0.179
Religious	dummy=1 if the respondent is a religious person (both practicing or not)	0.613	0.487
Age: under 35	dummy=1 if the respondent is at most 35 years old	0.314	0.464
Age: 36-45	dummy=1 if the respondent is 36 to 45 years old	0.245	0.430
Age: 46-55	dummy=1 if the respondent is 46 to 55 years old	0.252	0.434
Age: above 55	dummy=1 if the respondent is above 55 years old	0.190	0.392
More 100sqm flat	dummy=1 if the respondent's home size is bigger than 100 squared meters	0.371	0.483
High education	dummy=1 if the respondent holds at least a high school diploma	0.781	0.413
Not working	dummy=1 if the respondent before Feb2020 was unemployed, housewife, or retired	0.351	0.477
Network: Family	dummy=1 if the respondent relies on partner or relatives for a number of real-life events above the sample median	0.456	0.498
Network: Others (informal)	dummy=1 if the respondent relies on friends or colleagues for a number of real-life events above the sample median	0.496	0.500
Network: Others (formal)	dummy=1 if the respondent relies on GP, police, or psychologist for a number of real-life events above the sample median	0.495	0.500
COVID-19-related controls (referred to the first wave of COVID19: Mar-May 2020)			
Lockdown compliance	dummy=1 if the respondent declares having valued as very important to respect lockdown rules	0.759	0.428
Cohabitation distress	dummy=1 if the respondents experiences cohabitation distress during COVID19	0.174	0.379
Know a victim during COVID-19	dummy=1 if the respondent declares to know a victim of DV during COVDI19	0.100	0.300
(Fear of) Jobloss	dummy=1 if the respondent (is afraid to loose) lost her job due to COVID-19	0.336	0.472
Financial problems due to COVID-19	dummy=1 if the respondent has financial problems due to COVID-19	0.297	0.457
COVID-19 mortality rate	COVID-19 mortality rate due to COVID-19 standardized by the demographic characteristics of the resident population in each province (values expressed per 100,000 inhabitants - Source: Istat and Iss (2020))	55.132	61.319

Table A2: **Correlations among individual socio-economic controls**

	Stereotype	Kids	Married	Italian	Religious	A: below35	A: 36-45	A: 46-55	A: above55	More 100sqm flat	High Education	Not working	N: family	N: others (informal)
Kids	0.099													
Married	0.070	0.490												
Italian	-0.008	0.007	-0.000											
Religious	0.145	0.177	0.205	0.013										
A: below35	-0.010	-0.342	-0.315	-0.056	-0.127									
A: 36-45	0.056	0.090	0.043	-0.036	0.032	-0.385								
A: 46-55	0.037	0.141	0.147	0.049	0.038	-0.392	-0.330							
A: above55	0.017	0.151	0.163	0.052	0.074	-0.327	-0.275	-0.281						
More 100sqm flat	0.034	0.127	0.147	0.046	0.031	-0.035	0.008	-0.008	0.042					
High education	-0.078	-0.060	-0.050	0.023	-0.067	0.103	0.075	-0.084	-0.111	0.115				
Not working	0.000	-0.025	0.053	-0.032	0.041	0.038	-0.095	-0.047	0.111	-0.048	-0.1836			
N: family	-0.121	0.002	0.021	0.013	0.006	0.122	0.046	-0.056	-0.134	0.029	0.109	-0.0244		
N: others (informal)	-0.158	-0.102	-0.145	0.057	-0.130	0.057	-0.028	-0.022	-0.013	0.014	0.118	-0.080	0.134	
N: others (formal)	-0.080	-0.032	-0.036	0.013	-0.028	0.015	-0.047	-0.001	0.035	0.004	0.037	-0.037	0.050	0.144

Notes: See Table A1 for a description of the variables.

Table A3: **Measures of Gender Stereotypes**

Index	**Definition**	**Level**	**Source**
ISTAT Indexes	z-scores: average of the standardized distributions of the replies (of all respondents or only female respondents) to three questions. How much do you (totally or) agree with the following statement: 1. Men are less suitable for domestic chores; 2. When jobs are scarce, employers should prioritize men over women; 3. Men more than women should be the breadwinners	Regional	ISTAT
Employment Ratio	Ratio between female employment over male employment for workers older than 54 (1 being equal employment)	Regional	Italian LFS
Stereotype Index	z-score: average of the standardized distributions of the replies to 8 questions. How much do you (totally or) agree with the following statement: 1. In general, men are better political leaders; 2. In general, men are better managers than women; 3. If in a couple the woman earns more than the man, this can generate distress to the couple; 4. Family life might be put on strain if a woman has a full time job; 5. It is preferable *not* to use childcare for toddlers, as very small children are better off at home; 6. Childcare for toddlers is useless, as you still need a baby-sitter to reconcile professional and family life; 7. Childcare for toddlers is not important for their development; 8. We do not need more parental leaves for fathers	Individual	Our survey

Table A4: **Correlation coefficients of different measures of stereotypes**

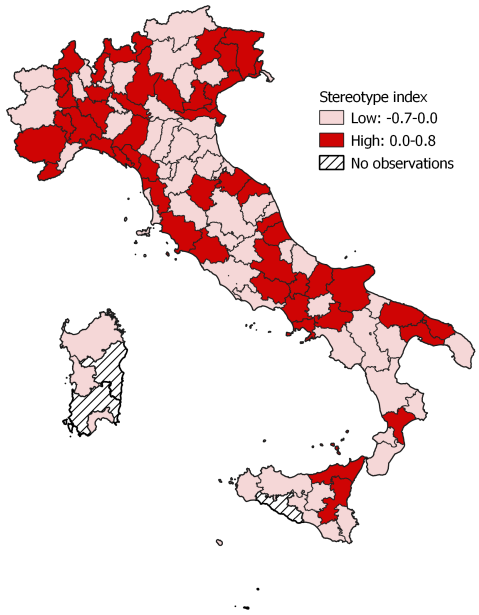
	Our Survey	ISTAT Females	ISTAT all
ISTAT Females	0.012		
ISTAT all	0.012	0.975	
Employment ratio	-0.010	-0.760	-0.785
		North	
ISTAT Females	0.012		
ISTAT all	0.024	0.411	
Employment ratio	-0.007	0.007	-0.068
		Centre and South	
ISTAT Females	0.042		
ISTAT all	0.041	0.981	
Employment ratio	-0.030	-0.820	-0.848

Source: For the definition of each stereotype index see Table A3.

Table A5: **Descriptive statistics - Outcomes**

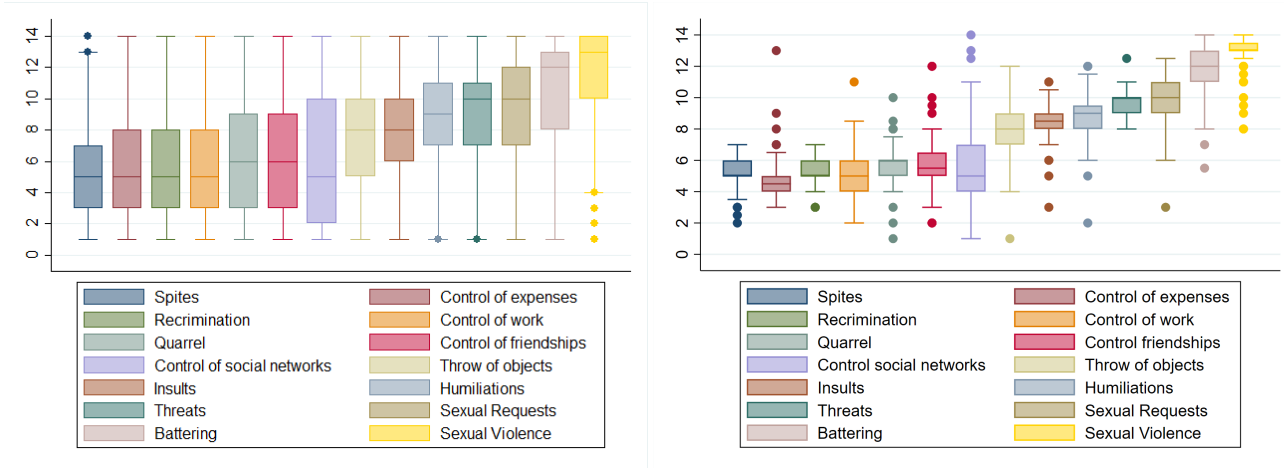
Variable	Definition	Mean	Std.Dev.
Perception of Violence (1)			
Perception	dummy=1 if the respondent knows a victim or considers violence largely spread in her province	0.495	0.500
Know a victim	dummy=1 if the respondent knows a victim of domestic violence	0.388	0.487
Spread violence	dummy=1 if the respondent considers violence largely spread in her province	0.239	0.427
Spread physical violence	dummy=1 if the respondent considers physical violence largely spread in her province	0.099	0.299
Spread psychological violence	dummy=1 if the respondent considers psychological violence largely spread in her province	0.222	0.416
Perception of Violence (2): behaviours			
Social	dummy=1 if the respondent rank behaviours related to social violence above the sample median	0.465	0.499
Economic	dummy=1 if the respondent rank behaviours related to social violence above the sample median	0.498	0.500
Psychological	dummy=1 if the respondent rank behaviours related to social violence above the sample median	0.474	0.499
Physical	dummy=1 if the respondent rank behaviours related to social violence above the sample median	0.467	0.499
Sexual	dummy=1 if the respondent rank behaviours related to social violence above the sample median	0.457	0.498
Perception of Violence (3): alibi			
Alibi COVID19	dummy=1 if the respondent justify violent behaviours with COVID19-related circumstances a number of time above the sample median	0.487	0.500
Alibi crisis	dummy=1 if the respondent justify violent behaviours with circumstances related to a period of crisis a number of time above the sample median	0.488	0.500
Alibi general	dummy=1 if the respondent justify violent behaviours with structural characteristics of the individual a number of time above the sample median	0.467	0.499
Reaction to Violence			
Reaction (Report)	dummy=1 if the respondent suggests to report to the police	0.520	0.500
Service	dummy=1 if the respondent suggests to refer to CAV, helpline 1522, or other services	0.805	0.396
Partner	dummy=1 if the respondent suggests to talk or leave the partner	0.304	0.460
No reaction	dummy=1 if the respondent have no suggestions	0.056	0.230

Figure A1: Distribution of individual stereotypes



Notes: The grey borders define the provincial administrative units. The red (darker) provinces are those with an individual stereotype index above the sample median.

Figure A2: **Ranking of behaviours (full list): Individual and provincial-level**



(a) Individual level (b) Provincial level

Source: Authors' survey. We report the average and median ranking for each behaviour in the sample for the 14 categories.

Table A6: **Level of Stereotype by outcome category**

Variable	Low level	High level	Difference
Perception of Violence (1)			
P	-0.002	0.002	-0.004
Know a Victim	-0.009	0.014	-0.023
Violence widespread	0.010	-0.031	0.041**
Violence widespread (Physical)	-0.005	0.044	-0.049*
Violence widespread (Psychological)	0.012	-0.042	0.054***
Perception of Violence (2)			
Social	-0.048	0.055	-0.103***
Economic	-0.030	0.030	-0.059***
Psychological	-0.016	0.018	-0.035**
Physical	0.056	-0.064	0.119***
Sexual	0.063	-0.075	0.138***
Perception of Violence (3)			
Alibi COVID19	-0.046	0.048	-0.094***
Alibi crisis	-0.023	0.024	-0.048***
Alibi general	0.076	-0.087	0.163***
Reaction to Violence			
R	0.044	-0.040	0.084***
Use of Service	0.041	-0.010	0.051**
Partner	-0.014	0.032	-0.045***
No reaction	-0.014	0.240	-0.254***

Notes: T-test comparing the level of stereotype by category of the outcome. * indicates significance at 10%, ** indicates significance at 5%, *** indicates significance at 1% level.

Table A7: **Presence of Anti-violence centres**

	ISTAT Females	ISTAT All	Employment	Our Survey	Mean
Service	0.515***	0.809***	-2.266	0.208	0.498
	(0.141)	(0.154)	(2.429)	(0.161)	
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Macro area FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
R square	0.270	0.357	0.172	0.179	
N	107	107	107	107	

Notes: Standard errors are robust. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. The outcome *Service* is measured as the number of anti-violence centers operating at the provincial level, over 100,000 inhabitants. The analysis include macro-areas fixed effects and a list of control for provincial (*i.e,* log gdp, female graduates, women in politics, male and female employment rate, percentage of female over total population) and regional (*i.e,* percentage housewife, rate of growth in housewife 91-01, rate of growth in housewife 01-11, male and female life expectancy) characteristics. If anything, we observe that the presence of services is higher among provinces with higher levels of stereotypes. This ensures that the lower use of services in case of higher stereotypes observed in Table A11 is not attributable to a lower presence of services in case of higher stereotypes.

Table A8: **Perception of Violence (1) - socioeconomic controls**

	Perception	Know a victim	Violence spread	Violence spread (Physical)	Violence spread (Psychological)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Stereotype	0.027	0.045***	-0.016	0.008	-0.019
	(0.023)	(0.009)	(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.017)
Kids	0.058**	0.051	0.033**	0.022	0.025**
	(0.014)	(0.025)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.006)
Married	-0.082*	-0.087**	-0.046*	-0.035***	-0.039
	(0.030)	(0.024)	(0.020)	(0.007)	(0.023)
Italian	-0.109**	-0.150***	0.033**	0.011	0.038
	(0.024)	(0.022)	(0.011)	(0.016)	(0.021)
Religious	-0.034*	-0.041*	-0.008	-0.008	-0.017
	(0.014)	(0.015)	(0.010)	(0.007)	(0.010)
Age group:					
36-45	-0.062**	-0.031	-0.083**	-0.032*	-0.073**
	(0.016)	(0.025)	(0.022)	(0.015)	(0.018)
46-55	-0.080*	-0.048	-0.113***	-0.045**	-0.098***
	(0.034)	(0.038)	(0.018)	(0.011)	(0.016)
Above 55	-0.103***	-0.054*	-0.118***	-0.036**	-0.099***
	(0.018)	(0.020)	(0.010)	(0.008)	(0.008)
More 100sqm flat	-0.018	0.013	-0.017	-0.006**	-0.016
	(0.017)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.002)	(0.015)
High education	-0.007	-0.013	0.017	-0.021	0.028*
	(0.013)	(0.009)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.013)
Not working	-0.052**	-0.028	-0.042*	-0.029**	-0.043*
	(0.018)	(0.019)	(0.015)	(0.009)	(0.018)
Network:					
Family	-0.01	0.015	-0.039	-0.050**	-0.025
	(0.030)	(0.025)	(0.020)	(0.012)	(0.019)
Others (informal)	0.052***	0.058***	0.01	-0.034***	0.017
	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.010)	(0.005)	(0.011)
Others (formal)	0.096***	0.104***	0.035**	0.006	0.031**
	(0.017)	(0.015)	(0.011)	(0.009)	(0.007)
Macro area FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Mean outcome	0.495	0.388	0.239	0.099	0.222
R-squared	0.037	0.036	0.032	0.029	0.031
N obs	4,574	4,574	4,574	4,574	4,574

Notes: Standard errors reported in brackets and clustered by macro-area.* indicates significance at 10%, ** indicates significance at 5%, *** indicates significance at 1% level.

Figure A3: Italian macro-areas

Italian macro-areas as defined by the National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT).

Table A9: **Perception of Violence (2): Rankings - socioeconomic controls**

	Social (1)	Economic (2)	Psychological (3)	Physical (4)	Sexual (5)
Stereotype	0.068***	0.038***	0.012	-0.066**	-0.083***
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.021)	(0.015)	(0.008)
Kids	0.036**	0.029	0.039*	-0.064**	-0.038**
	(0.012)	(0.025)	(0.018)	(0.019)	(0.013)
Married	-0.011	-0.004	-0.002	0.004	0.016
	(0.017)	(0.008)	(0.020)	(0.014)	(0.009)
Italian	-0.069	-0.08	-0.054	0.181***	0.057
	(0.060)	(0.039)	(0.029)	(0.005)	(0.039)
Religious	0.049***	0.026	0.027***	-0.076***	-0.036**
	(0.005)	(0.017)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.012)
Age group:					
36-45	-0.070***	-0.016	0.04	0.058*	-0.042*
	(0.015)	(0.023)	(0.019)	(0.027)	(0.017)
46-55	-0.073	-0.052	0.031	0.081*	0.016
	(0.034)	(0.032)	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.028)
Above 55	-0.136***	-0.103*	0.071*	0.124**	0.03
	(0.022)	(0.047)	(0.026)	(0.030)	(0.015)
More 100sqm flat	-0.009	-0.027	0.034	0.005	-0.004
	(0.014)	(0.017)	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.014)
High education	-0.080**	-0.034	-0.021	0.094***	0.107***
	(0.018)	(0.017)	(0.023)	(0.013)	(0.018)
Not working	-0.054**	-0.034**	0.006	0.062**	0.084***
	(0.018)	(0.010)	(0.007)	(0.017)	(0.016)
Network:					
Family	-0.071***	-0.058***	0.006	0.095***	0.056***
	(0.006)	(0.010)	(0.012)	(0.009)	(0.007)
Others (informal)	-0.044	-0.034**	-0.015	0.078***	0.096***
	(0.025)	(0.011)	(0.016)	(0.011)	(0.010)
Others (formal)	-0.022	0.012	-0.035**	0.029*	0.030*
	(0.018)	(0.016)	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.013)
Macro area FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Mean outcome	0.465	0.498	0.474	0.467	0.457
R-squared	0.037	0.018	0.014	0.060	0.055
N obs	4,574	4,574	4,574	4,574	4,574

Notes: Standard errors reported in brackets and clustered by macro-area.* indicates significance at 10%, ** indicates significance at 5%, *** indicates significance at 1% level.

Table A10: **Perception of Violence (3): Alibi - socioeconomic controls**

	Alibis COVID-19 (1)	Alibis crisis (2)	Alibis general (3)
Stereotype	0.076***	0.050***	-0.097***
	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.013)
Kids	0.027	-0.035	-0.001
	(0.023)	(0.025)	(0.007)
Married	-0.012	0.016	-0.024
	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.020)
Italian	0.054	-0.072**	-0.065*
	(0.042)	(0.019)	(0.028)
Religious	0.081***	0.069***	-0.010
	(0.007)	(0.003)	(0.015)
Age group:			
36-45	-0.080**	0.016	0.019
	(0.025)	(0.034)	(0.010)
46-55	-0.107***	-0.001	0.018*
	(0.023)	(0.015)	(0.008)
Above 55	-0.088*	0.031	0.016*
	(0.035)	(0.037)	(0.006)
More 100sqm flat	0.023**	-0.007	-0.011
	(0.006)	(0.016)	(0.011)
High education	-0.054**	-0.003	0.040
	(0.013)	(0.023)	(0.024)
Not working	-0.074***	-0.015	0.038*
	(0.013)	(0.017)	(0.017)
Network:			
Family	-0.004	0.093***	0.144***
	(0.020)	(0.019)	(0.023)
Others (informal)	0.011	0.047**	0.133***
	(0.010)	(0.013)	(0.015)
Others (formal)	0.007	-0.014	0.084***
	(0.019)	(0.016)	(0.010)
Macro area FE	yes	yes	yes
Mean outcome	0.487	0.488	0.467
R-squared	0.030	0.020	0.083
N obs	4,574	4,574	4,574

Notes: Standard errors reported in brackets and clustered by macro-area.* indicates significance at 10%, ** indicates significance at 5%, *** indicates significance at 1% level.

Table A11: **Reaction to Violence - socioeconomic controls**

	Reaction (1)	Service (2)	Partner (3)	No reaction (4)
Stereotype	-0.062***	-0.037*	0.055**	0.043***
	(0.012)	(0.016)	(0.015)	(0.009)
Kids	-0.021	-0.005	0.018	0.005
	(0.028)	(0.007)	(0.016)	(0.007)
Married	-0.018	0.033	-0.056**	-0.004
	(0.028)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.005)
Italian	0.037	0.028	-0.04	-0.018
	(0.020)	(0.024)	(0.042)	(0.037)
Religious	-0.013	0.044**	-0.046**	-0.014
	(0.021)	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.007)
Age group:				
36-45	-0.006	0.024	-0.043**	0.006
	(0.011)	(0.015)	(0.014)	(0.013)
46-55	-0.024*	0.037***	-0.039	-0.002
	(0.010)	(0.005)	(0.030)	(0.007)
Above 55	-0.016	0.026	-0.063***	-0.012
	(0.027)	(0.013)	(0.012)	(0.007)
More 100sqm flat	-0.016	0.020**	-0.012	0.000
	(0.018)	(0.005)	(0.011)	(0.012)
High education	0.027	-0.015	0.023*	-0.010
	(0.024)	(0.014)	(0.010)	(0.006)
Not working	0.009	-0.030**	0.016	0.021**
	(0.036)	(0.010)	(0.013)	(0.007)
Network:				
Family	-0.024***	0.016	0.015	-0.021**
	(0.002)	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.005)
Others (informal)	0.040***	-0.007	0.045**	-0.022**
	(0.006)	(0.009)	(0.013)	(0.005)
Others (formal)	0.009	0.016	0.005	-0.001
	(0.015)	(0.012)	(0.015)	(0.009)
Macro area FE	yes	yes	yes	yes
Mean outcome	0.520	0.805	0.304	0.056
R-squared	0.013	0.014	0.021	0.022
N obs	4,574	4,574	4,574	4,574

Notes: Standard errors reported in brackets and clustered by macro-area.* indicates significance at 10%, ** indicates significance at 5%, *** indicates significance at 1% level..

Table A12: **Determinants of rankings (continuous outcomes)- standard controls**

	Social (1)	Economic (2)	Psychological (3)	Physical (4)	Sexual (5)
Stereotype	0.570***	0.392***	0.032	-0.407***	-0.652***
	(0.056)	(0.033)	(0.054)	(0.074)	(0.063)
Kids	0.074	0.066	0.146*	-0.332*	-0.246***
	(0.128)	(0.178)	(0.068)	(0.139)	(0.045)
Married	-0.059	-0.018	0.029	-0.007	-0.003
	(0.072)	(0.057)	(0.051)	(0.096)	(0.057)
Italian	-0.815*	-0.485**	-0.167	1.346***	0.454
	(0.322)	(0.169)	(0.084)	(0.118)	(0.248)
Religious	0.246***	0.179*	0.082**	-0.387***	-0.286***
	(0.032)	(0.073)	(0.026)	(0.042)	(0.057)
Age group:					
36-45	-0.295	-0.176	0.057	0.363	-0.065
	(0.162)	(0.167)	(0.041)	(0.234)	(0.139)
46-55	-0.389	-0.392	0.018	0.487	0.24
	(0.306)	(0.265)	(0.064)	(0.268)	(0.168)
Above 55	-0.909***	-0.672**	0.127*	0.802**	0.397***
	(0.154)	(0.220)	(0.051)	(0.200)	(0.064)
More 100sqm flat	-0.102	-0.160**	0.081	0.051	-0.033
	(0.104)	(0.057)	(0.041)	(0.113)	(0.068)
High education	-0.615***	-0.438**	-0.091	0.635***	0.693***
	(0.125)	(0.133)	(0.051)	(0.072)	(0.129)
Not working	-0.465***	-0.283**	-0.009	0.344**	0.431**
	(0.081)	(0.085)	(0.008)	(0.075)	(0.106)
Network:					
Family	-0.546***	-0.443***	-0.016	0.560***	0.476***
	(0.031)	(0.023)	(0.022)	(0.052)	(0.051)
Others (informal)	-0.443**	-0.361***	-0.098*	0.476***	0.622***
	(0.158)	(0.058)	(0.042)	(0.091)	(0.044)
Others (formal)	-0.194	0.037	-0.085**	0.197**	0.213*
	(0.094)	(0.088)	(0.023)	(0.051)	(0.085)
Macro area FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Mean outcome	6.265	5.688	7.103	9.008	10.229
R-squared	0.049	0.033	0.017	0.079	0.081
N obs	4,574	4,574	4,574	4,574	

Notes: Standard errors reported in brackets and clustered by macro-area.* indicates significance at 10%, ** indicates significance at 5%, *** indicates significance at 1% level.

Table A13: **Determinants of rankings (continous outcomes)- standard controls and COVID-19 controls**

	Social (1)	Economic (2)	Psychological (3)	Physical (4)	Sexual (5)
Stereotype	0.376***	0.237**	0.029	-0.255***	-0.444***
	(0.077)	(0.055)	(0.052)	(0.043)	(0.022)
Lockdown compliance	-0.835**	-0.620***	0.023	0.631***	0.755**
	(0.228)	(0.061)	(0.047)	(0.125)	(0.219)
Cohabitation distress	0.171	0.133	0.087**	-0.264*	-0.300***
	(0.125)	(0.107)	(0.029)	(0.113)	(0.064)
Know a victim during COVID19	0.366**	0.520**	-0.097	-0.074	-0.521***
	(0.119)	(0.161)	(0.070)	(0.111)	(0.061)
(Fear of) Jobloss due to COVID19	-0.033	-0.05	0.055	-0.026	-0.056
	(0.051)	(0.122)	(0.037)	(0.079)	(0.072)
Financial problems due to COVID19	0.27	0.15	0.062	-0.284**	-0.323*
	(0.165)	(0.152)	(0.062)	(0.077)	(0.119)
COVID19 mortality rate	0.001	-0.001	0.000	0.000	0.002
	(0.003)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.002)	(0.001)
Controls	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Macro area FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Mean outcome	6.265	5.688	7.103	9.008	10.229
R-squared	0.062	0.044	0.019	0.093	0.104
N obs	4,574	4,574	4,574	4,574	4,574

Notes: Standard errors reported in brackets and clustered by macro-area.* indicates significance at 10%, ** indicates significance at 5%, *** indicates significance at 1% level.

Table A14: **Alternative stereotype proxies**

Outcome	**Our Survey 2**		**Slap acceptability**		**Drunk acceptability**	
Perception of Violence (1)						
P	0.024	-0.005	0.033	-0.034	-0.003	-0.035
	(0.023)	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.027)	(0.021)	(0.019)
Know a Victim	0.043**	0.006	0.058	-0.027	0.011	-0.032**
	(0.010)	(0.008)	(0.033)	(0.034)	(0.018)	(0.011)
Violence widespread	-0.021	-0.029	-0.023	-0.041	-0.021	-0.027*
	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.023)	(0.029)	(0.013)	(0.010)
Violence widespread (Physical)	0.005	0.001	0.034	0.025	0.015	0.012
	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.023)	(0.022)	(0.015)	(0.016)
Violence widespread (Psychological)	-0.024	-0.031	-0.030	-0.046	-0.023*	-0.027**
	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.028)	(0.036)	(0.010)	(0.007)
Perception of Violence (2)						
Social	0.064***	0.042**	0.188***	0.076*	0.103***	0.076***
	(0.007)	(0.011)	(0.021)	(0.030)	(0.011)	(0.010)
Economic	0.036***	0.019	0.098**	0.068*	0.096***	0.077***
	(0.007)	(0.009)	(0.022)	(0.025)	(0.014)	(0.012)
Psychological	0.017	0.020	-0.010	-0.006	0.020	0.024
	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.011)	(0.019)	(0.014)	(0.016)
Physical	-0.064***	-0.034**	-0.147**	-0.092*	-0.094**	-0.058
	(0.014)	(0.010)	(0.034)	(0.040)	(0.022)	(0.027)
Sexual	-0.082***	-0.053***	-0.135***	-0.076**	-0.170***	-0.136***
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.017)	(0.023)	(0.009)	(0.015)
Perception of Violence (3)						
Alibi COVID19	0.077***	0.056**	0.091***	0.051*	0.101**	0.072*
	(0.010)	(0.012)	(0.017)	(0.020)	(0.028)	(0.028)
Alibi crisis	0.052***	0.047***	0.036	0.023	0.063**	0.059**
	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.021)	(0.017)	(0.016)	(0.020)
Alibi general	-0.099***	-0.073***	-0.152***	-0.099***	-0.162***	-0.129***
	(0.012)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.009)	(0.011)	(0.015)
Reaction to Violence						
R	-0.061***	-0.057***	-0.121***	-0.114***	-0.076**	-0.068**
	(0.010)	(0.009)	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.021)	(0.023)
Use of Service	-0.040*	-0.035**	0.033	0.049	0.001	0.008
	(0.015)	(0.010)	(0.019)	(0.026)	(0.010)	(0.009)
Partner	0.058**	0.051***	-0.021	-0.045	-0.004	-0.015
	(0.013)	(0.010)	(0.017)	(0.024)	(0.012)	(0.010)
No reaction	0.042***	0.036**	0.076***	0.067**	0.048***	0.041**
	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.008)	(0.009)
Controls	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
COVID19 Controls		yes		yes		yes
Macro area FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
R-squared						
N obs	4,574	4,574	4,574	4,574	4,574	4,574

Notes: Our Survey 2: distance of the individual stereotype index from the provincial average. * indicates significance at 10%, ** indicates significance at 5%, *** indicates significance at 1% level.